

Southwest Brooklyn 2001 District Year-End Review

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



2001 Year-End Wrap-up



Congresswoman Velázquez answers schoolchildren's questions in District 15 this year.

Educating Kids for the Future

Congresswoman Velázquez recognizes that education and training are the keys to success. Earlier this year she released a study showing that many schools in our community lack computers and other technology that students need to be competitive in the new economy. To address these issues, she has introduced the **Education Technology Equity Act** to put more computers in schools and the **Parental Involvement Enhancement Act** to ensure parents can play a role in their children's education.

Congresswoman Velázquez also worked successfully with colleagues to pass major education legislation. It will improve schools across the City by setting new standards for teachers and ensuring

that all students, regardless of ethnic or socioeconomic background, receive the same assistance. New York City will get a 29 percent increase in federal funds next year, up from \$492 million to \$636 million.

Congresswoman Velázquez pushed for adoption of her proposal to help schools obtain after-school program funding.

In Southwest Brooklyn, Congresswoman Velázquez worked to open four new Community Learning Centers for School District 15, helping children and adults to gain real hands-on experience with advanced technology.

Congresswoman Velázquez is committed to ensuring students everywhere get the very best education available, which is what all children deserve.

Helping Small Business

Small businesses are the life blood of our local economy. As the Democratic leader on the House Small Business Committee, Congresswoman Velázquez has worked with the Small Business Administration to provide assistance to New York's

enterprises affected by the events of September 11, disbursing \$163 million to New York enterprises so far.

The Committee recently passed her small business proposal to provide grants to those businesses especially hard hit.

Dear Friend,

It has been a year of tragedy and triumph, for New Yorkers and Americans everywhere. As we look to the new year, I hope to take a moment and share with you some notable achievements of the past 12 months. Our lives have been disrupted – for some, in ways we can only pray for the strength to carry on – but New Yorkers have responded with courage and character that make us the most admired in the world.

We have moved forward towards recovery and returning to the business of the country. Congress also passed major education reform legislation and enacted tough new airline security measures. In addition, Congressional Democrats are hard at work to provide assistance for workers who have lost jobs in the softening economy.

We made major grants for housing, educational and community improvement in the 12th District. And district residents won significant victories for environmental quality for their children and neighborhoods.

I want to thank everyone in the community for their hard work and effort this year, especially as we coped with the aftermath of September 11.

Sincerely,

She also prevailed on the SBA to open a disaster services workshop in the 12th Congressional District.

Legislative Achievements

Congresswoman Velázquez introduced 12 bills this year, covering subjects such as public housing employment opportunities, patients' rights, disaster recovery, and better education. Following are some legislative highlights:

Bills Introduced

Managed Care Bill of Rights for Consumers Act: Requires managed health care plans to guarantee certain basic services to patients.

Education Technology Equity Act: Narrows the "digital divide" by providing funds to low-income schools for educational technology.

Community Environmental Equity Act: Prohibits discrimination in locating polluting facilities in low-income communities.

Housing and Employment Opportunities Reform Act: Requires a portion of HUD funding for public housing works projects to be used to employ tenants.

Phoenix Fund for Victims Assistance: Allows taxpayers to dedicate their tax refund to a relief fund for victims of the September 11th terrorist attacks.

American Small Business Recovery Act: Provides grants, low-to-no-cost loans, and loan forgiveness for small businesses injured as a result of the events of September 11.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Recipients Lifeline Act: Eliminates the five-year lifetime limit on welfare benefits and allows legal immigrants to qualify.

Amendments

Amendment to No Child Left Behind Act: Enables deserving communities to receive funding for after-school programs. NOW LAW

Amendment to H.R. 2620: Increases funds by \$10 million for YouthBuild, providing on-the-job training in skilled trades for at-risk youth. NOW LAW



Congresswoman Velázquez has long defended the rights of public housing residents. Here she meets with tenants during a meeting at Farragut Houses to discuss NYCHA policies.

Fighting for Jobs, Affordable Homes

Access to safe and affordable housing is one of the most difficult challenges facing families in New York City. As the only representative from New York City on the Housing Subcommittee, Congresswoman Velázquez is fighting for affordable housing for families while defending the rights of public housing residents.

One of her biggest priorities is ensuring that public housing residents have access to skills and training. Congresswoman Velázquez introduced the **Housing and Employment Opportunities Reform Act** to guarantee residents' access to the jobs created in their communities. Con-

gress also approved her initiative to fund the YouthBuild Program to provide skills training for low-income and at-risk youth.

This year Congresswoman Velázquez organized several town hall meetings to inform public housing residents of job opportunities in their communities and to educate them on their rights. She also worked with Congressional Democrats to stop the onerous Republican-imposed "community service requirement."

Nothing is more important to families than their homes. Congresswoman Velázquez is committed to housing opportunities for every New Yorker.



Congresswoman Velázquez hosted a town hall meeting on public health and homeland security.

Fighting Terrorism, Funding Recovery

Congress has responded to September 11 to prevent future terrorism and bioterrorism threats:

Funding Recovery

The federal government has spent \$3 billion of \$20 billion the President has committed to New York disaster recovery. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has designated \$2 billion for individual and family assistance in New

York City.

Protecting American Workers

Thousands of New Yorkers have lost their jobs as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Congressional Democrats are determined to provide meaningful relief for these workers. Our economic stimulus package includes unemployment benefits and health care subsidies for families.

Securing our Skies

Air travel links us to work, home, and family. After the September 11th hijackings, Congress passed legislation to secure our airlines and airports with comprehensive baggage screening and federalizing airport workers.

Preventing Terrorism

Congress, working with the President, has created the Office of Homeland Security to develop a comprehensive national strategy to protect the United States from terrorism.

Federal Funds Won for Gowanus Work Plan

\$225,000 to fund comprehensive reuse study after environmental survey

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez won \$225,000 in a federal Interior Department appropriations bill for the Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation to complete a comprehensive community development survey for the area around the canal in Brooklyn. The Gowanus Canal runs one and a half miles from Butler Street to the New York Bay. Years of municipal wastewater overflow and local industrial discharge have contaminated the canal and sediments, making it a health hazard.

While construction of the Red Hook Water Pollution Control Plant and the recent reactivation of a flushing tunnel have significantly improved the water quality in the Canal, habitat restoration will not be complete until the contaminated canal sediments have been removed.

Last year, Congresswoman Velázquez asked the Army Corps of Engineers to assess the feasibility of dredging the canal to remove contaminated sediment permanently.

The Development Corporation's community-intensive planning process will guide the Corps of Engineers survey as part of a comprehensive plan to build more parks, homes and businesses along the Canal.

"I have been working hard to make sure the Gowanus Canal is cleaned up, rehabilitated, and reused," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "This money builds on the Army Corps study I requested. The reuse plan and Army Corps study are two big steps towards creating a community area that everyone can use."



Congresswoman Velázquez worked with community activists and the federal government to find solutions to cleaning up Gowanus Canal.

Protecting Our Environment and Our Communities

Gains made against unfair siting of polluting power plants



Congresswoman Velázquez gave a statement in opposition to the placement of a Fan Plant near Burdick homes this January.

One of the most critical issues facing the 12th Congressional District is making sure that neighborhoods are healthful and safe. Our community has seen a disproportionate number of power plants and waste transfer sites – nearly 90 percent of the City's commercial waste and almost half its residential waste are handled in the 12th Congressional District. Reversing this trend and protecting families is a top priority for Congresswoman Velázquez.

To safeguard the environment, Congresswoman Velázquez has introduced the **Community Environmental Equity Act**. This legislation protects communities from being unfairly burdened by the over-concentration of pollution-producing facilities like waste transfer stations and power plants.

In Brooklyn, Congresswoman Velázquez is fighting to stop the opening of as many as eight new polluting power plants. She hosted a town hall meeting on public health after Sept. 11 to hear from federal and local officials on environmental concerns involving the clean up effort at the World Trade Center.

People everywhere deserve clean air and water and a community free of contaminants. Congresswoman Velázquez is committed to protecting the environment and public health.

Major Progress Seen on Gowanus Expressway

Lawsuit clears way for tunnel study to replace aging road span

The Gowanus Expressway, a 1941 three-mile elevated highway, must be completely rebuilt. Congresswoman Velázquez secured funding in an appropriations bill for the VA-HUD agencies to study a tunnel alternative and supported a lawsuit filed by community groups in Red Hook and Sunset Park to make sure the study to move traffic underground proceeded in good faith. Recent settlement of the suit moved forward a study of tunnel alternatives for the expressway.

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of this study to the revitalization of Sunset Park and Red Hook," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Moving the Expressway underground would enhance community development, reduce noise and asthma rates, especially among children living along the corridor."

Congresswoman Velázquez has worked closely with the Community Stakeholders Group, made up of community representatives and elected officials, which meets regularly to explore low-impact replacement alternatives, such as tunnels. Proposals have been narrowed down from 41 possibilities to 13 for further study.

A Community Technical Advisor and a cost-benefit analysis form part of an expanded Environmental Impact Statement that are direct results of the settlement. "I am making it a high priority to ensure that the \$18 million I secured goes to this study and is used wisely," Congresswoman Velázquez said.



Brooklyn Bridge Park Gets Federal Funds for Study

\$1,000,000 used to examine pedestrian access to East River waterfront

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez (D-N.Y.) secured \$1 million in a transportation appropriations bill to study ways to ensure greater access to the Brooklyn Bridge Park while reducing auto traffic to a minimum.

The park will be located at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge, stretching over a mile from DUMBO to Atlantic Avenue, to create much needed public access to the waterfront. The waterfront park will provide Brooklyn residents with open and recreational space and draw visitors from other areas.

New York State has already committed \$85 million and the City \$65 million to the park’s development. About \$400 million in private investment is anticipated. The park is expected to create more than 1,000 new jobs.

Alternative forms of transportation to increase the park’s public use – including easier subway access through the creation of a pedestrian tunnel, bikes with greenway connections, electric trolleys, and jitney buses – are being discussed.

“Transportation and public access are key to the success of the park,” Congresswoman Valázquez said. “This funding will be used to study what will enable people to get to and from the park in the most environmentally sensitive and cost-effective way.”

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation (BBPDC), a community-based organization, was created in 1998 to spearhead the effort to reuse the downtown Brooklyn waterfront as a park. BBPDC led a two-year-long public planning effort which culminated in a Master Plan for Brooklyn Bridge Park, endorsed by more than 30 community, neighborhood and civic organizations.

The BBPDC has been charged with addressing the reuse of the 67 acres of publicly owned property stretching 1.3 miles along the waterfront from Joralemon Street to a ConEd lot north of the Manhattan Bridge.



Congresswoman Velázquez secured \$1 million to study access routes to the Brooklyn Bridge Park, which is currently under development.

Major Federal Grants Awarded to Our Community

Congresswoman Velázquez hosted four forums this year to teach residents about federal grant opportunities in education, housing, health care, and child care. Here are some grants won as a result:

Economic Development

Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation

175 Remsen Street, Suite 350
\$250,000 for Minority Business Opportunity Committee grant

Education

Community School District 20

1031 59th Street
\$1,442,594 for 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Community School District 15

360 Smith Street
\$800,000 for 21st Century Community Learning Centers
\$7,338,813 in Magnet School grants

Community School District 20

1031 59th Street
\$7,199,505 in Magnet School grants

Appropriations

Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation

515 Court Street
\$225,000 to complete community development plan for area around Gowanus Canal

Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation

\$1,000,000 for public access study for the Brooklyn Bridge Park

Public Health

Lutheran Medical Center

Sunset Park Family Health Center

150 55th Street
\$1,149,957 to assist communities and health professionals to coordinate health care for the uninsured.